

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MONTEV 01656 192057Z
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C O N F I D E N T I A L MONTEVIDEO 1656

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM, EFIN, EBRD, IDB, UY
SUBJ: DECISION ON IBRD/VOCATIONAL TRAINING LOAN

REF: STATE 118545

1. THERE HAVE BEEN SOME ENCOURAGING DEVELOPMENTS ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS FRONT IN URUGUAY DURING THE PAST FEW MONTHS WHICH EMBASSY HAS ANALYZED AND REPORTED IN DETAIL IN EARLIER TELEGRAMS. FOREMOST AMONG THESE WERE THE CONSTRUCTIVE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES AND ABA VISITS, ESPECIALLY THE LATTER WITH ITS PROMISE OF FUTURE PROGRESS, AND THE OPENING OF A NATIONAL INFORMATION OFFICE TO RESPOND TO INTERNATIONAL INQUIRIES ABOUT PRISONERS. NEW DETENTIONS HAVE SLOWED TO A TRICKLE AND THERE HAVE BEEN ONLY A FEW REPORTS OF PRISONER MISTREATMENT AS THE SECURITY FORCES CONTINUE TO MAINTAIN ANTI-SUBVERSIVE OPERATIONS AT A SHARPLY REDUCED LEVEL. MOREOVER THE ABA VISIT HAS STIMULATED SOME SIGNS OF RESURGENCE IN THE PRESS AND IN THE LOCAL EQUIVALENT OF A BAR ASSOCIATION WHICH THE GOU TO DATE HAS TOLERATED. IN ADDITION THERE ARE FAVORABLE INDICATIONS THAT THE GOU MAY RE-ESTABLISH ITS RELATIONS WITH THE ICRC AND THAT IT WILL PURSUE A MORE RESPONSIBLE AND FORTHCOMING POSITION ON HUMAN RIGHTS AT THE VIII OASGA. ON THE OTHER HAND, LITTLE CONCRETE ACTION HAS BEEN TAKEN TO IMPLEMENT MANY
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 MONTEV 01656 192057Z

OF THE ABA MISSION'S RECOMMENDATIONS, AND THERE HAVE BEEN SEVERAL NEW CASES OF HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES, SUCH AS THOSE OF VILARO SANGUINETTI AND VARGAS SACCONI.

2. ON BALANCE, A YES VOTE COULD NOT BE JUSTIFIED SOLELY ON THE BASIS OF SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENTS IN HUMAN RIGHTS PERFORMANCE. BUT I BELIEVE THERE IS A GOOD CASE TO BE

MADE FOR VOTING YES AS A MEANS OF REINFORCING THE POSITION OF THE MODERATE MILITARY ELEMENTS WHO HAVE BEEN IN THE VANGUARD OF BRINGING CHANGE HERE. OUR YES VOTE WOULD STRENGTHEN THEIR HAND IN THEIR ONGOING STRUGGLE WITH THE FAR RIGHT MILITARY AND CIVILIAN HARDLINERS. GENERAL ALVAREZ AND HIS GROUP HAVE NOT BEEN AS SWIFT AND EFFECTIVE IN MOVING TO IMPLEMENT CHANGES AS WE AND OTHERS HOPED THEY WOULD BE. BUT THEY HAVE MADE SOME PROGRESS AND, MORE IMPORTANTLY, I BELIEVE THEY ARE DISPOSED TO CONTINUE THEIR FIGHT TO LIBERALIZE THE SOCIETY. THE VOCATIONAL LOAN, COMING AT THIS TIME, PROVIDES US WITH AN OPPORTUNITY TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE POSITIVE STEPS TAKEN TO DATE AND TO SUPPORT MOVEMENT TOWARD THE FURTHER REFORMS THAT WE HOPE TO SEE IN THE FUTURE. A NO VOTE, PARTICULARLY OUR FIRST ONE ON A BHN LOAN WHICH WOULD CONSTITUTE A FURTHER TURNING DOWN OF THE SCREW, WOULD SERIOUSLY UNDERMINE THE MODERATES AND PLAY INTO THE HANDS OF THE HARDLINE OPPOSITION. I THEREFORE COME DOWN ON THE SIDE OF A YES VOTE PRINCIPALLY TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE MOMENTUM OF POSITIVE STEPS TO DATE AND TO HELP THE MODERATE FORCES SUCCEED.

3. I DO NOT CONSIDER ABSTENTION TO BE A VIABLE ALTERNATIVE IN OUR PRESENT SITUATION. WE NEED TO EMIT A STRONG, CLEAR SIGNAL TO BOTH SIDES AS TO OUR POSITION AND THE REASONS FOR IT. AN ABSTENTION, WHICH EACH SIDE CAN INTERPRET TO SUIT ITS OWN PURPOSES, SIMPLY WILL NOT DO THIS.
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 MONTEV 01656 192057Z

4. IF WE DECIDE ON A YES VOTE AT THE MAY 30 MEETING WE SHOULD COMMUNICATE THIS DECISION PROMPTLY TO THE GOU, BOTH IN WASHINGTON VIA AMBASSADOR PEREZ CALDAS AND VIA THIS EMBASSY. IN DOING SO WE SHOULD MAKE CLEAR THAT OUR ACTION IS AN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS TO DATE, AS WELL AS A CLEAR SIGN OF OUR SUPPORT FOR THE PROGRESS WE HOPE TO SEE IN THE FUTURE, PARTICULARLY IN IMPLEMENTING THE ABA MISSION'S RECOMMENDATIONS.
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